

RESOLUTION NO. 2009-146

A RESOLUTION OF THE LODI CITY
COUNCIL ADOPTING POLICY REGARDING
LEGISLATIVE INVOCATIONS BEFORE
MEETINGS OF THE LODI CITY COUNCIL

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The Lodi City Council ("the Council") is an elected legislative and deliberative public body, serving the citizens of Lodi, California, and after hearing makes the following findings:

WHEREAS, the Council wishes to maintain a tradition of solemnizing its proceedings by allowing for a pluralistic call to civic responsibility according to the faiths or beliefs of Lodi's citizens (the "Invocation") before each meeting, for the benefit of the Council; and

WHEREAS, the Council now desires to adopt this formal, written policy to clarify and codify its Invocation practices and amend the Council Protocol Manual adopted by Resolution No. 2006-45 accordingly; and

WHEREAS, in *Marsh v. Chambers*, 463 U.S. 783 (1983), the United States Supreme Court rejected a challenge to the Nebraska Legislature's practice of opening each day of its sessions with a prayer by a chaplain paid with taxpayer dollars, and specifically concluded, "The opening sessions of legislative and other deliberative public bodies with prayer is deeply embedded in the history and tradition of this country. From colonial times through the founding of the Republic and ever since, the practice of legislative prayer has coexisted with the principles of disestablishment and religious freedom." *Id.*, at 786; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court has determined, "The content of [such] prayer is not of concern to judges where. . .there is no indication that the prayer opportunity has been exploited to proselytize or advance any one, or to disparage any other, faith or belief." *Marsh*, 463 U. S. at 794-795. Thus, *Marsh* focuses on exploitation of the prayer opportunity and efforts, direct or not, to proselytize; to promote or sell a particular religion; and

WHEREAS, in *Simpson v. Chesterfield County Bd. of Supervisors*, 404 F.3d 276 (4th Cir. 2004), *cert. denied*, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit reviewed and specifically approved as constitutional the prayer policy of a county board, and made a number of findings about the policy; and

WHEREAS, the Council acknowledges the general guidance provided by the Fourth Circuit's findings in *Simpson*, including the fact that the policy there:

(1) Allowed for invocations for the benefit of the legislative body itself "rather than for the individual leading the invocation or for those who might also be present," *Id.*, at 284; and

(2) Established a practice in which various clergy in the county's religious community were invited on a rotating basis to present invocations before meetings of the board; *Id.*, at 279; and

(3) Thus, “made plain that [the county board] was not affiliated with any one specific faith” by allowing different persons from different religious convictions and backgrounds to offer the invocations. *Id.*, at 286; and

WHEREAS, in *Pelphrey v. Cobb County, Georgia*, 547 F.3d 1263, 1271 (11th Cir. 2008), the Eleventh Circuit embarked on a thorough and scholarly examination of the *Marsh* test for invocations when it affirmed as constitutional the invocation policy of a county commission. In so doing, the Eleventh Circuit reached very similar findings as to those of the Fourth Circuit in *Simpson*, and the Council finds its findings also provide useful guidance:

(1) The *Marsh* Court considered several factors to determine whether the legislative prayers at issue had been exploited to advance one faith in violation of the Establishment Clause - the Court weighed the chaplain's religious affiliation, his tenure before the legislative body, and the overall nature of his prayers. *Marsh*, 463 U.S. at 792-95. The “nonsectarian” nature of a chaplain's prayers is but one factor in this fact-intensive analysis and it does not form the basis for a bright-line rule. *Pelphrey*, 547 F.3d at 1271; and

(2) An invocation policy which results in prayers from speakers from a wide cross section of a municipality's religious leaders (i.e., leaders of Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Unitarian faiths), and which allows prayers that include specific references from each of the various faiths, does not advance, proselytize or disparage any particular religious faith. *Id.* at 1277-1278; and

WHEREAS, the Council notes that the Ninth Circuit, in an unpublished decision, has also acknowledged that a policy for invocations that, “as is traditional in Congress, rotate[s] among leaders of different faiths, sects, and denominations” may pass constitutional muster due to the fact that such a policy does not proselytize or disparage any particular religious belief. *Bacus v. Palo Verde Unified School District Board of Education*, 52 Fed.Appx. 355, 356 (9th Cir.2002); and

WHEREAS, the Council acknowledges the decision of California Second District Court of Appeal in *Rubin v. City of Burbank*, 101 Cal.App.4th 1194 (2002), which found illegal an invocation policy that allowed references to particular faiths. However, the Council believes the *Rubin* holding does not apply to the policy set forth herein because:

(1) The *Rubin* policy was not open to all religious groups within the City of Burbank; and

(2) The *Rubin* policy was not open to non-religious groups; and

(3) Appearances under the *Rubin* policy were controlled by a pastoral association; and

(4) The *Rubin* Invocation was given during the Council meeting;

WHEREAS, invocations consistent with the policy adopted herein are currently offered before the United States House of Representatives, United States Senate, and the California Senate; and

WHEREAS, the Council intends and has intended in past practice, to adopt a policy that does not proselytize, advance or disparage any particular faith or religious

belief or show any purposeful preference of one religious view to the exclusion of others; and

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes its constitutional duty to interpret, construe, and amend its policies and ordinances to comply with constitutional requirements as they are announced; and

WHEREAS, the Council accepts as binding the applicability of general principles of law and all the rights and obligations afforded under the United State Constitution and the Constitution of the State of California.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Lodi City Council that the Council hereby adopts the following written policy regarding legislative invocations before meetings of the Council, to wit:

1. In order to solemnize proceedings of the Council, it is the policy of the Council to allow for a legislative invocation (the "Invocation") to be offered before its meetings for the benefit of the Council. The Invocation shall be given in the manner of a "Call to Civic Responsibility" encouraging the Council to consider the City's business with open minds and make just, wise and compassionate decisions.

2. The Invocation shall occur at 6:55 p.m. prior to the opening and noticed start time of the Council's meeting and shall be listed on the agenda.

3. No member or employee of the Council or any other person in attendance at the meeting shall be required to participate in any Invocation that is offered.

4. The Invocation shall be voluntarily delivered by an eligible person as detailed below. To ensure that such person (the "Invocation Speaker") is selected from among a wide pool on a rotating basis, the Invocation Speaker shall be selected according to the following procedure:

- a. The City Clerk (the "Clerk") shall compile and maintain a database (the "Invocation List") of the religious congregations and secular groups with an established presence within and around the City of Lodi.
- b. The Invocation List shall be compiled by referencing the listing for "churches," "congregations," or other religious assemblies and nonprofit civic groups in the annual Yellow Page phone book(s) published for the City of Lodi, research from the Internet, and consultation with local Chambers of Commerce. All religious and secular groups with an established presence in the local community of Lodi including Lodi citizens who must leave Lodi to attend a house of worship are eligible to be included in the Invocation List. Any such group not otherwise identified for participation may request its inclusion by specific written communication to the Clerk.
- c. This policy is intended to be and shall be applied in a way that is all-inclusive of every diverse religious and secular group within and around the City of Lodi. The Invocation List is to be compiled and used for purposes of logistics, efficiency and equal opportunity for all who may choose to participate in the Invocation.

- d. The Invocation List shall also include the name and contact information of any chaplain who may serve one or more of the fire departments or law enforcement agencies of the City of Lodi.
 - e. The Invocation List shall be updated annually, by reasonable efforts of the Clerk.
 - f. Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this policy, and annually each calendar year thereafter, the Clerk shall mail an invitation addressed to each group listed on the Invocation List, as well as to the individual chaplains included on the Invocation List.
 - g. Respondents to the invitation letter shall be scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis to deliver the Invocation.
- 5. No Invocation Speaker shall receive compensation for his or her service.
 - 6. The Clerk shall make every reasonable effort to ensure that the eligible Invocation Speakers that are scheduled to give the Invocation before the Council meetings represent a variety of view points from within and around the City of Lodi. In any event, no Invocation Speaker shall be scheduled to offer an Invocation at consecutive meetings of the Council, or at more than two (2) Council meetings in any calendar year.
 - 7. Neither the Council nor the Clerk shall engage in any prior inquiry, review of, or involvement in, the content of any Invocation. Moreover, the Invocation may be given in a manner that respectfully references the faith or beliefs of the Invocation Speaker. However, no Invocation Speaker shall give an Invocation that seeks to: 1) convert those present to a particular religious belief or seeks to demean a particular religious belief or lack thereof; 2) advocates a political agenda; or 3) asserts the accuracy, inaccuracy, or primacy of any religious belief or lack thereof. Invocation Speakers who violate this policy shall be permanently removed from the Invocation List and their Invocation may be interrupted and terminated by the Mayor.
 - 8. Shortly before the opening gavel that officially begins the meeting and the agenda/business of the public, the Mayor shall introduce the Invocation Speaker, and invite only those who wish to do so to stand for those observances given for the benefit of the Council.
 - 9. In the event that the Invocation Speaker does not or cannot appear as scheduled, or in the event that no Invocation Speaker has volunteered or been scheduled for a particular Council meeting, shortly before the opening gavel that officially begins the meeting and the agenda/business of the public, the Mayor shall announce a moment of silence for individual reflection; and invite only those who wish to do so to stand for those observances given for the benefit of the Council.
 - 10. This policy is not intended, and shall not be implemented or construed in any way, to affiliate the Council with, nor express the Council's preference for or against, any faith or religious denomination, belief, affiliation or lack thereof. Rather, this policy is intended to acknowledge and express the

Council's respect for the diversity of religious and non-religious thought represented and practiced among the citizens within and around the City of Lodi.

- 1 ■ . To clarify the Council's intentions, as stated herein above, the following disclaimer shall be included in at least 10 point font under the Invocation Agenda Item:

"Invocations may be offered by any of the various religious and non-religious organizations within and around the City of Lodi. Invocations are voluntary offerings of private citizens, to and for the benefit of the Council. The views or beliefs expressed by the Invocation Speaker have not been previously reviewed or approved by the Council, and the Council does not endorse the beliefs or views of any Invocation Speaker or religious organization."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this policy shall become effective immediately.

Dated: October 21, 2009

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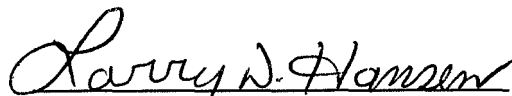
I hereby certify that Resolution No. 2009-146 was passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Lodi in a regular meeting held October 21, 2009, by the following vote:

AYES: COUNCIL MEMBERS – Hitchcock, Johnson, Katzakian, Mounce,
and Mayor Hansen

NOES: COUNCIL MEMBERS – None

ABSENT: COUNCIL MEMBERS – None

ABSTAIN: COUNCIL MEMBERS – None


LARRY D. HANSEN
Mayor

Attest:



RANDI JOHL
City Clerk